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THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS

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THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS

by

SACHEVERELL SITWELL

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Contents

	PAGE
TEN SERENADES	9
THE ITALIAN AIR	17
FABLES	23
CHURCH AND STAGE	25
VALSE ESTUDIANTINA	27
ONE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS (SELECTIONS)	
i. A PRO'S LANDLADY	30
ii. AT BREAKFAST	31
iii. READING THE PAPER	32
iv. IN THE TRAIN	33
v. AT THE TAILOR'S	34
vi. AT THE TELEPHONE	35
vii. PORTRAIT OF MR. G. F. M. AIREY (A SECRETARY)	36
xi. FROM A HILLTOP	37
THE HOCHZEIT OF HERCULES	38
ET IN ARCADIA, OMNES	44
TWO CLOWNS' PSYCHOLOGY	55
THREE VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY GEORGE PEELE	64
MRS. H.	70
WEEK-ENDS	71

PAGE

THE BIRD-ACTORS - - - - - - - 75

TWO VARIATIONS ON THEMES OUT OF "ZARATHUSTRA"

i. "LAUGHING LIONS WILL COME" - - 76

ii. PARADE VIRTUES FOR A DYING GLADIATOR - - - - - - 83

DR. DONNE AND GARGANTUA (1ST CANTO) - 91

A MARCH PAST AT THE PYRAMIDS - - - 102

THE NEPTUNE HOTEL - - - - - 112

TO
ADA LEVERSON

Serenades

I

SIGH soft, sigh softly,
rain-thrilled leaves,
let not your careless hands
stem the gold wind!
Let not your greensleeves
swim in its breath,
as water flowing;
lest your thin hands
make gurgle down the crystal hills
the gaudy sun's pavilions
whence he distils those showered scents
whose virtue all true turtles croon
beneath their swaying palaces.
Sing low, then, turtles,
Sigh soft, swift wind,
and, fountains, cease your flutings.
Melulla, now,
lean on your balcony! look down!
My strings shall sing.

II

ANSWER again you burning streams,
Nor bend your flame, nor melt your snows,
It is not only straw that burns
To feel the hot sun look on it,
And every phœnix is not dead.

III

OPEN your window. Let the air flow in
alive with waterfalls of flashing wings,
so can your fever know a cooling touch
and feel the feathers of my song as such.
Is all silent in your room?
Then come down among the dew soft lawns,
and if I knew the stairway for your feet
should lie below it in the luscious grass
and watch your coming, as one waits to feel
cooler from showering of falls
that play, like you, among the burning rocks.
Then with fulness in my arms
ripest weight down-bowed from trees
to fall through sun's heat to the green
laughing lawns more soft than water;—
full with ripeness, tasted, fired,
I shall journey through the heat
with my load of living fruit,
and if I do not like the lawns
can lay it on a yielding cloud
whose proud battlements will melt
and run, as water, at your burning touch.

IV

I SEE no breath upon the window's water,
hear no feet below the shining trees;
must I never let the music slacken,
fold its wings away, sink on my knees?

Will the leaves tremble till I know their tune
in fiery praise of all the licking tongues
that lap the crystal darkest night has laid
to light her feet along the fickle walls
unseen, but built again when daylight comes ?
In between these trembling leaves
and underneath the liquid light
another harvest has its sheaves,
the gold heads of the foam shine bright,
waves, as houses built on cloud,
crumble to nothing as they sail,
the windows where you once were proud
are raining water, fence and rail
that latticed all the roads of sight
are twisted rainbows, broken swords.
The way is open, where you lie,
I see the clouds climb down the sky
and lay you in the frothy waves
that run to meet you, as your slaves.

V

Low wind, soft light, and the crumbling waves
lay down their fleeces at the mouth of caves ;
the lion sands become clouds and beds,
windows in the foam, cool roof for our heads.
Here are new seconds in a moment's bliss
to add a paradise to our kiss.
The unicorns gallop over the sand
to give the bird songs into my hand,
they spread their wings and move their tongues,

the leaves are lute-strings to their lungs,
the clouds dissolve and shower-down, sharp,
rain that the wind plucks as a harp ;
the music bridges the shallow stream
that cuts reality from this dream,
to cross it, listen with keen ears ;
this voice that sings shall ease your fears.

VI

THE trees are shaking down their gold,
tumbling this homage from the sun,
a gentle wind plays with the leaves
and lies where he can watch the clouds ;
he feels the green, and eats the fruit,
quite near his youngest lambs begin
to leap across the hills and climb
until they frisk among the burning rocks
and leave their wool upon the peaks.
The shepherd jumps up, leaves the shade,
and runs to rally his wide flock
and knows their presence from these wisps
and hears them bleating from the plain.
So I must start, and leave the trees
and come down to the water's edge.
The water rings are near the shore
and when they break their silver chain,
I'll hear the foam that sings the more
it touches all that gives me pain.

VII

ARE the caves cool with water
that you sleep there hiding from the eager sun
and make me wait an hour of slowness
while I watch the sparks that run
to kindle in among the leaves,
the tongues of flame that leap this hour
to sing more loudly than the seas
before their waves can splash your tower ?
If you are cool, I know the spray
has reached you with its gentle rain,
the cave you lie in, is alive
with fiery tongues to please your brain ;
those trembling strings cannot be blind,
they are not sightless with their sound,
they sing still sweeter till they find
the crystal and the snow that wound.

VIII

I LOSE my treasure bit by bit,
it slides like sand and tells my wit
the riches that I've stored for you
are there to squander for us two.
Then I will spend them till the fields
glow in the gold my harvest yields,
and when we've gathered, I will sow
so you may lie to watch it grow.
A second summer in one spring
will fire our fancy, till a wing

winnowing the windy air
will lift us on its feathers there.
The clouds, whose battlements will melt
to run as water, when they felt
your burning touch, will open wide
and show the sources of their pride.
The gentle flowers, the hills of snow,
the unicorns, the birds you know
that sing out till you sleep and dream
are now as living as they seem ;
then go on sleeping, do not wake !
Your wants I'll find, your thirst I'll slake.

IX

I BURN with equal fires, not knowing my desires
nor fear the bitter thrills, cool snow for burning hills,
the dying from fulfilment ;
and know what things my will meant
in an image of white opening wings
fanning softness, life that stings
now blood runs in my watery veins
flooding them with summer rains
that fall to raise the gentle wind
which fills a sail, in sleep you find
the snows have melted from the hills
that I can compass, keep from ills ;
the lance I ride with is just right
to pierce the fruit that shine so bright,
dangling from the leaves that shake
to lose the treasure that I take.

The living pillars that I hold
and guard with loving for their gold
move their music as a beam
drops from a cloud, and turns to steam,
they melt their rapture into mine
and fill each curve with tingling line
until the sail fills and the air
sings with each cloud and shouts out loud,
the sun who combs his glittering hair
from glassy ocean answers proud.

X

WHERE is the balm that hides the phœnix breast
who dies, but liveth by his wings so blest;
his gold sails furled, but fiery with the light,
his feathers molten in the hot sun's sight?
Pulseless heart, blind eyes, and breathless mouth,
dead to the waters that can sure his drouth.
If I can find it, will swift blood again
spring in my fountains, strike my leaves like rain,
cool white sails, fill the broad lake to its brink,
offer the thirsty melting snows for their drink?
His plumes are painted, but their power is gone,
lost are the treasures that my pride had won;
the phœnix floats among the flames, and breathes;
may I, then, live again to cut the sheaves.
To store your treasure till I try the taste
and know our feasting will not leave a waste.
Now can I burn, and know the balm is true,
for flames but kindle, as the phœnix knew;

full of this spice he drifted into the sun
who lapped his feathers with fire, made the run
of his raiment, plume on plume, into wings ;
the shortlived pleasure and the sleep that stings
for renouncing it, these are the forging fire—
new wings for the phœnix ; and end to my ire.

The Italian Air

In among the apple trees
and on their echoing golden roofs,
a singing shower rides on the breeze,
and prints the grass with crystal hoofs.

The sighing music faints and fails
among the far-off feathered boughs,
the birds fold up their painted sails;
but voices sound, until they rouse

the sleeping birds and silent leaves;
and now a harp once more resounds,
to utter what her heart believes
and what her trembling sense confounds.

His daring loudness wakes the house
that sleeps beneath a staring sun,
the birds awake: the cattle browse:
the page jumps down, begins to run

across the flower-beds; now there rings
another voice of sterner kind,
the harp still sounds; Figaro sings
to ease his master's troubled mind.

Her thoughts now hold him in a net,
he fills the meshes and respires,
low boughs of fruit-trees, lush and wet,
drop rain on him, while from the spires

a bell sets shaking every glass,
rattles the windows in the trees,
he strains the meshes, tries to pass,
but now the bells die on the breeze.

This sudden stillness brings again
the silence when his song was done,
the notes that melted all her pain ;
the sunset failing of the sun

robs the shadows of their gold,
and as night darkens, he goes back,
the bleating lambs are in the fold,
and all the cattle walk the track

that leads along the grass to home,
he steals among them through the gate ;
they, within these walls, can roam ;
but he is prisoned by hard Fate,

and led by chains within this yard
whose frontiers are the barren walls,
the windows of this house are barred,
there sound no footsteps in its halls ;

when suddenly a light shines out,
Figaro whispers from the sill,
the subtle winds run forth and shout
leaving their shelters on the hill ;

they drop from trees, come forth from caves
and fill the valley with their noise,
they sing like rivers, foam like waves,
and roof this wanderer with the poise

of plumes that shut off light and drown
hot words with soaring of loud wings,
they screen the clamour of the town,
and let him breathe the fire he brings

to fill his heart and touch with flame
her fancy, as she hears the rungs
upon the ladder creak his name
and all the fountains flash their tongues.

They sing like birds and preen their feathers
the nearer Cherubino goes
the brighter burn their plumes in weathers
far too fiery for the rose,

and climbing, he will comb his hair
and trim his wings for further flight,
will turn the currents in the air
to make them watch this lovely sight;

for she will draw him in her net
until he reaches her high stage
still painted with the fruit and wet,
this bird will burst his brittle cage.

He will cross the broken bars
and fly between the golden scales,
his waving plumes will flash like stars,
and cool the Heavens with their sails.

Now he rests upon the ledge
preparing for this last short leap,
before his newest wings can fledge.
She leaps and saves him from the deep,

she draws him from those crystal fields
still smelling of sweet juice and foam,
he sinks with his last breath, and yields,
her arm is strong to lift him home.

And now to mask the noisy night,
to muffle words and mute the feet,
Figaro strikes the strings, and bright
the harp rings with its sudden beat:

Count Almaviva stirs in sleep
and wakes to look out through the dark,
he marks a bleating of the sheep,
and, like the oars that push a bark,

he hears the strings that carry song
and listens to the serenade,
he little knew the grievous wrong
that lurked behind the cloak it made.

For now the page unclosed his eyes,
and kindled with the fire again,
he saw, in front of him, the prize
to solace all his long-lived pain.

Before the gift was in his hands
there came a moment of fierce thrills,
he smoothed down the soft yellow strands,
and preened the music of his quills.

Just then a gentle rain began
to fall among the apple trees,
the harp played louder, and there ran
a shiver and a sound of bees

as all the winds came home to rest
and perched among the glittering boughs
they shook each leaf, and turned its vest
more gorgeous than the man who ploughs

will find the summer fields he reaps,
for each leaf shook and showed the moon;
in cloudless sky and in the deeps
a strength arose, a subtle boon.

For light shone in the room and showed
more clear than any waterfall,
the flame that burnt more where it snowed,
until the fire hid with its pall,

a thick cocoon, the life within
that smouldered, now to start afresh
and break out from the senseless skin
with ready wings and living flesh.

These silk-worms spin the sheathing cloth
that lies about our limbs like sleep,
it will not burn with flame, no moth
can spoil the glow its colours keep ;

and they shall sew themselves some wings
with silken feathers for the clouds
to feel the speed their fancy brings
as they will pass those drifting crowds

that wander, mob-like, on the road
before a wind can herd them on,
and where they saw a river flowed,
or, looking for a lake, found one,

above the foam of waves, they float
to sleep in softness, as of air
while, with slow motion, like a boat,
they glide on, and he smoothes her hair.

WHO taught the centaur first to drink
Ladling his huge hands from the brink—
When other monsters lie and lap
The waters like a fruitful pap ?—

The same who by ingenious ways
Taught the chameleon his rays
To take from leaves of tow'ring trees
Strung thick with dew-bells that the bees
Set ringing, till they bring the honey,
Thrilled with music, gold with money
Back to their castles in the clouds—
And the chameleon, his crowds
Of foes to fight with, has two eyes
That travel sideways, no surprise
On any side. He swiftly sees
All—flowers, slow floating birds and bees.

The gentle, loving unicorn
Will never eat the grass—
All bushes have too many thorns,
Their leaves are made of brass.
His horn is given him to take
The soft fruit from the trees.
" Please grasp my horn and roughly shake,
O nymph, among those leaves ;
This pear transfixed upon my horn ;
I cannot reach "—beyond the brim ;
Clutched at ; she misses ; it has gone.
"Alas ! You've got it ! " " I can't swim."

To comb a satyr's silken beard
Arabian travellers aspire,
They beg, they bribe ; more loved than feared
The satyr trots to take his hire—
Fawning, he takes from outstretched hand
Such fruit his eyes have sometimes seen
On swaying branches where the land
Sighs in a soft wind and the green
Leaves shake beneath the nightingale.
Thus cajoled, they can reach his beard
Where gums lie, gathered from the frail
Flowers he feeds on, where no voice is heard.

Church and Stage

TERRA feros partus immania monstra gigantas
Edidit ausuros in Jovis ire domum,
Beating the marble floor with well-drilled, giddy
precision,
The hosts of aspirants are on the safest road to
Heaven.

De facto, or indeed, before they see
The bubble of our pride above their head,
The sound of far-surpassing seraph voices
May raise you, for a moment only, with the dead.

And there you have the chance I so desire
To hear the singing of the true elect
Who celebrates, above our carnal hire—
For friendship only—their most happy state.

The seraphs and the cherubim
Are singing through the crystal leaves
That guard the empty balconies
And echo round the silent eaves.

The pagan halcyons confine
Their soft-breathed flutings to the lifeless woods,
That with their brittle arms entwine
The zephyrs hiding from the gold-maned sun.

And hidden from the peeping eyes
Of prostrate multitudes who pray,
The famous vocalist outpours
The song of nightingales at play.

Provincial daughters, every whim,
As every caprice, gratified,
Your chattering voices raise the hymn
As a pure flower of thanksgiving

Outside, like tumbling acrobats
On green-spread carpets who let fall
Their weary limbs before the town,
That fountain flashing through the tall

And agitated trees throw down
The showering, scintillating plumes,
As if, above the hollow town,
Among the feeding flocks of clouds,

Great birds are clinging to the flowers
Our feeble voices prosper in the air,
In hopes of reaching the unshuttered light
Behind which burns the molten god-like hair.

Valse Estudiantina

A WALL of cactus guards the virgin sound—
Dripping through the sword-edged leaves
The wayward milking
Of your mental stalactites
On the strung bells of music,
Arrests the moment,
Petrifies the air.

As you trudge along the path
Laid down before you,
Counting all the trees
Remembering the turnings
Instead of resting on the wooden seats,
You lie among the thistles in the sun.
Your poor jangle spreads along the street,
Filtering the voices of the passer-by,
Embroidering the singing in the lines of wire,
And masking as with histrionic aim
The bird-sound of long-distance messages.
Now with a practised hand
The music-master will release the waltz
That makes a difference in our lives.
With one hand on the railing
To feel the rings of sound,
One might emphasise the vision—

Some are sitting under flame-touched trees
Where the generous sun
Has run the fierce green plumes

Set quivering on the harp-strings of the boughs,
Has run them to a fine fire of gold,
Has quickened them,
As islands cut the currents of the sea,
To the full spun colour
Of the floating jewels
That part the wind's gold hair,
And fill the ultimate sea
With all its canopy of clouds,
And tents of quick blue hills
With the new message of their incense-cells.

Beneath these trees
The suffocated crowd extends
Its troubled surface,
Till toying with another figured shape
The extreme couples lie among the grass.
This tune brings evening ringing down
On the well-bedecked windows of the day,
And rising on their tired feet,
Running the fingers through their flower-decked hair
They leave the vast arena of the band
Moving on the tight-rope of the tune.

Ring out, ring out now, ring out now,
The blare of your hundred brass trumpets
Shake the leaves down, shake the leaves down,
Make the clouds dance like flowers in the wind.

In the darkening room
You sit beside the piano
Where the music-master

Stretches his shadow.
As he moves his hands,
In your mind ringing on its meals,
The rightful tunes to play
Are the sweet songs of birds,
The yaps of dogs,
Hot water tapping in the leaden pipes,—
As a final consummation
Father arriving by the evening train.

From " The Hundred and One Harlequins "

I

A PRO'S LANDLADY

Mrs. Serapion knocks upon the door,
The sun has risen from his couch upon the floor.
" Mr. Grimaldi ! seven o'clock ! "
Above the foam of the sea he shows,
And Harlequin jumps from his bed of snows,
While Mrs. Serapion warns the block.
He walks to the window where a tree grows in,
Stirring the leaves that are green and thin.
He shaves. He washes. And he combs his hair.

II

AT BREAKFAST

"A glass of milk as white as your hand,
The foam of the seas that lie on the land,
Their grass runs swift in the wind like a wave;
A cup of this foam:—and then I crave
Snow-bread that the hills have ground their gold to!"
The cheap shepherdess replied,
Her words still-born—dead drowned by the roar.
A railway engine ran across the field
Galloping like a swift horse down the rails,
As it came quicker the window-panes rattled,
The roof shook side to side: all its beams trembled,
Thundering hoofs were upon us—glass chariots.

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III

READING THE PAPER

THE second train he boarded with a paper,
He hides behind it from his fellows,
This bird-mask let him know the news,
He sees, like they do, from the air.
There they ride, each person in a carriage,
Each of them steering his cloud through the air.
All that goes on in the world they gather.
A visor to guard, and a mask to protect them.
Now, with their speed the white mane flows loose.

IV

IN THE TRAIN

In crystal chariots drawn by unicorns,
As did old Fortunatus in his day:
I can shine in loud streets with honour,
Grip the gold reins and go just where I will:
Ride from the town beneath an arch
  Whose bricks like honeycombs shall store my name
Beside the river we will gallop.
My rattling wheels outpace the drifting float
Of leaves that whirl among the river's eddies
As fell strong towns that glittered as my foes:—
Down to where it mingles with the sea
Fanning new freshness to the foaming waves.
Just there my unicorns sniff in the salt,
Worry the water with white trembling feet,
Whinny their pleasure, and turn back again.

V

AT THE TAILOR'S

GRIMALDI never answered his tailor,
He looked in the glass and was far too busy.
" Forgive the liberty, bend your elbow.
Where do you want the outside pocket ? "
Such words and scissors are too worldly !
What did God say when he ordered birds ?
" I insist on at least two coats a year
And made of material that will not tear.
They shall search the grass to find their food,
Leaving a flash of light where they stood.
In case on their search they find some fruit
They shall float in the air and have wings to suit.
Crests I'll allow them as gay as flowers
And plumes that gleam bright as jewels, even through showers.
But I won't have them always calling My name,
They must imitate man, and make him feel shame."

VI

ON THE TELEPHONE

He crouched like a monster at the bottom of a pool,
The glass pane showed him there huddled on his stool :
The jangling of sledges that he overheard
On snow more sleek than the feathers of a bird
Glided along behind high-stepping horses,
And the voice of Madame Hanska rang loud in the pauses.
The man who wrote novels and had such queer manners
Liked a fierce polonaise with its proud flying banners ;
If he could have heard the noise down these cold wires
I think he'd grow tired of a tune that perspires :
The tinkling pagodas of coloratura
With bells of harmonic glass, sweeter, far purer,
Than all the cascades of sound rung by the clowns
Who cool with their water-songs all the hot towns :
The tenor who grates, and loud-sighing contralto
Should sing from their barges beneath the Rialto :
There they may stay, while the telephone carries
The fur-footed dance of a person he marries.

VII

PORTRAIT OF MR. GEO. F. M. AIREY—A SECRETARY

So many thousand portraits,
Never yet has a Harlequin been taken
As he sits inside a window at unruffled glass!
He sits mouthing like a goldfish;
None of his words can creak out from the water.
Cocked-hat like a peacock perking and prying,
The window of his telescope and he's our admiral.
He will have the clouds here and there!
The ships with big sails bear the brunt of the fighting.
Wind will carry the lighter ships
Round the enemies' wings towards the harbour town.
The Harlequin crew run like lightning up the ropes,
They sputter through the dashing waves
And don't lose their colour.
Wherever there is lighter wind and no curving waves
They are standing in the windows of their blue-black caves.

XI

FROM A HILL-TOP

I SEE the ordered world,
fast gurgling rivers and the slower falls
gliding, like slow music, through gold plains.
Look how the clouds dance
turning as each wave of the wind breaks!
These waterfalls, these fiery snows,
for music and for dancing ground;
here for their pleasure shall the tyrants tremble
and tread this glistening lawn before their wives.
While they slumber we will help ourselves.
First to the fruit that lit each tree with fire,
and then to the flames that flicker through these
leaves.
Take heed they burn not,
while you sever, flame from smoke—
but soon as they're parted, every tongue begins,
they flicker and sing forth again,
singing like loud stars the while they dance.

The Hochzeit of Hercules

AT the first sound of sun
for which the leaves hold still their ears,
I leave my bed and run
forgetful of my years;
in summer when the birds sing louder
I quickly reach the waterside
and flash my muscles in the light,
for the water soothes me
and I like to break the waves
that tease me as I cannot swim.
I stand there as a statue, my reflex curved and bent
below,
while the green grass is laid for me to roll on
and the tall trees clap their coloured wings
hiding the fruits I love.
I drop the chains, and lift my hands
leaving this mirror for the sun,
and run, all naked, to the horizontal bar,
whereon I swing in unison
to solar rules and lunar orderings.
I swing back a moment, gain momentum,
rise to the top, and ride my bar again.
From here I see the ordered world
fast gurgling rivers and the slower falls
gliding like slow music down the hills,
and listening, mark the many lutes
played behind windows in the gold-lit trees,
answered by fierce plucking of the strings
from fields fingered by the wind:—
then as the music drifts away to start

the far-off machinery of sea.
my hour arrives to dive into the dark
and watch, head downward, the fire-plumed eyes
that order all our happenings—
upon this plateau now I stand
fulfilling my first promise of giant strength,
throwing great weights across a belt of sea,
or buffeting the clouds with closèd fists.
Shall I shatter mountains as a house of glass
and throw the shivering sea across my back,
would you like to see me with a load of Towns
stepping on far islands to attain the sky?
Just as clear as my reflection I can see
the imitations offered in your land,
the strong man throwing pebbles for a bet
and batting in the summer to a band,
climbing little hills with crooked sticks
instead of smashing them in fragments as I do,
and swimming like tired rabbits in a pond,
though this, I know, is more . . .
There are twelve shadows in my foaming wake
more lasting than my labours and more keen,
they stand there stronger than the hills I shake
and challenge all the splendour that has been.
I have no patience with the men of brains
who wear their armour to ward off my chains,
the straining of my fetters gives me space,
their steel is but a mirror to my face,
their lovely treasures need a shield to keep,
before I go to take them, and they weep;
the battery and cunning of my arm
sounds louder than shrill trumpets to alarm.

Early in the morning all the bells began
before the trees felt wind to fan
white sails into a landlocked bay
where the dead deep sea showed a cloudless day.

These ships glided through the night
to see the splendour, share the sight
when Hercules, triumphant, rides
with tigers and the crouching tides.

He has taken from fat kings
their motor cars and diamond rings,
the fountains tumble while they shine
with running nectar, sacred wine.

The sailors jump in the surf, and swim,
they need not do it—it's a whim—
they climb on the pier, dripping, cold,
and run to the nectar as if it were gold.

Hercules still is inside the church,
while the brimming fountains glisten and sing,
he joins in the service till the windows ring,
the captains marshal their companies,
extending to line the street;
glass chariots wait at the church door,
the unicorns fidget their feet.

Now
down
the aisle
he's walking
in his
five-league boots.

A flash
and
he's through
the portal,
posing there
for the reporters.

They could not open the chariot,
they drove with it, shut, behind crystal;
the coachman and the postilions
had all they could do to move off.
They drove like a fireball falling down the sky,
the unicorns galloped with them almost off the ground
the wheels and the windows flashed their fire.
Who can say what the fountain thought
when they dashed round a corner
splashing right through its spray?
Down the Marina, by the side of the sea,
they stopped for a moment to receive an address.
Hercules stepped out of his chariot
and then assisted his bride to get down.
He held in his hand the casket they gave him,
the golden key, and the message on vellum:
cries of "Speech" . . . "Speech" . . . .
Such a crowd, and such shouting,
they were none of them silent.
When he spoke it was like a concerto for piano
played by a student with the orchestra too big.
We could just hear:
"Remember I am not a thinker . . . plain soldier,
simple, and . . . read or write . . .
. . . Please . . . declare open . . . with pleasure . . .

. . . I shall have . . . thankfully . . .
. . . sure I shall never forget. . . .
" Good-bye," into the chariot and off again.

All round the town, up and down the avenues,
constantly appearing at the end of views :
with military bands in every square
keeping up the awnings and doing their share,
till now, at last, they reach the courtyard of the Palace,
in front of them the sea that's live with fishing boat
and pinnace.
For by now the sailors having tasted nectar
row to their ships again and sail out to sea,
they tack near the terraces, and look for Hercules
finishing his banquet in a gallery of glass ;
they throw rope-ladders and they climb up through
the pilasters
leaning on the battlements like pinnacles of Heaven ;
down in the banquet-hall they see their hero
hurrying through his dinner so that he may join them.

Now that the wedding, the procession, and the
banquet,
all are finished, he is free to end the day
exhibiting his strength before the city and the bay.

First he breaks an iron bar,
snapping it in fragments,
then he takes a tree and shakes it
like a baby's rattle till its roots leave the ground ;
he stands in a little stream
damming its current

till the waters well up high and shake themselves
like lions ;
now when they're fierce enough
he steps aside :
out they come, rolling, running,
leaping over the heads of the other,
salt, weaker waves ;
the boats in the bay ride over them,
jumping their own horses in the rolling fields of sea ;
they pass the vessels and they fall upon an island,
surge over the rocks
with their streaming manes in the wind.

By this time Hercules hides behind a hill,
and the sun is also hidden
behind dark windows in the glass-clear sea.
Hercules is back in his bedroom,
he sleeps with arms akimbo and a sword by his side,
lulled by the songs his wife sings softly ;
he stirs at a sentrie's tread,
and wakes when his unicorns whinny from their
stables.
But the horses of the sun have already left their stalls :
they stand in the chariot traces
trembling cold in the early wind
that runs round shaking all the bells upon the trees.
The sun comes down the steps out of his house
looking at the clouds
to choose the road he'll take among them,
then he climbs into the chariot and they rattle up the
sky—
while Hercules is sleeping, lulled by music, far below.

Et in Arcadia, Omnes

(*From "The Bird-Actors"*)

THE stars, but prophets call them sons of God,
Lay in the fresh field, and the cool wind trod,
Striding, across the bodies where they slept
And woke them to the glory that they kept
All day in bondage until darkness came,
When movement flowed as water, gold as flame

The gods now rise and let the new light run
Rippling its quick strong life and substance spun
From fluttering wings and fiery breasts of clouds
Along their limbs just risen from the shrouds
Of death-like slumber till they play again;
Blue hills, far islands watch them, and the plain.

Above white clouds the stars come from their tent
On which to-day's dead light spills lustre, spent,
And feeble after fiery beams and bars
Have burned the sea with madness, earth with wars,
And made still waters mirror in their glass
The gold hung woods, and gliding clouds that pass,
Dip their tall towers like pennons in the lake
When, hidden from the sun, their thirst they slake
Till, at the time the nightingales begin,
The clouds have vanished, and the night is thin.

Now at their settled stations in the sky
The stars are still, or spread their wings to fly,
Are motionless, or moving with their gold
Through Heavens wide as water, and as cold.
Looking between sharp edges of the leaves
Beneath black-shadowed houses, and their eaves
Still shining in the evening rain, there show
Unfolding flowers that tremble as they grow,
And several ships with glittering sails of glass
Swim the blue seas, or flat beneath the mass
Of towering cliffs down which the gold men leap,
Cross the wide sands, run down the shelving steep,
Ride on the foam, and climb the golden ropes
Until the soft-breathed wind fulfil their hopes.

Now that the sky is once more set with signs
From balconies above a tree that shines
With fan-like agitation of the wind
Revolving its lush petals till they bind
Their spinning dance into a formless round,
The people lean and listen to the sound
Of voices parting the dim green, and strings
That wave-like beat their foam upon the wings
Flashing below the crystal fall of song,
Which, melting, drops in music on the throng.
From bird-throats kissing the warm air there drops
The mingling of cool snow and flame through stops
Of flute-like tongues that gather fire from light
To make their honey golden to our sight.

. . . . . .

The poorest even have their hour of pleasure
When the daylight fails

And the more advanced young women
Play the piano,
While the more advanced young men
Accompany them with song,
And those who cannot play their part,
Sit in the window.

At a late hour all the voices stop,
The day's perpetual sound is dead,
So still now
That you think the singers
Must still be in that room,
The women sleeping with the half-closed eyes
Of wax-work figures,
And the men as plaster caryatides
Upholding the low roofs of lodging-houses
On their sad, crushed heads.
The next few hours are far the best
In which to temper truth with a trite compromise.

In more imaginative lands
Our instruments are still the string
That carry every trembling confidence
Through a half-open window—
Till, stepping to the water's edge,
You see your own tall shadow
In the clear windows of the water
With white pointed mask
Abetting your new self disguised ;—
And all the music of the air obeys
The silver presence singing in the trees
And giving time its intervals of lucid silence

While the wind touches the taut strings of the sea,
And the waterfalls of light
Drip through the leaves
Upon the dew-drenched grass.
If such and such sit in the gamut of one's life
Within the same close box of yellow bricks,
Under a mutual roof;
Bow from the windows if you walk beneath
And leash themselves to let you climb the stairs,
Is not a little latitude allowed
For subtle insolence, and half-veiled threats?

Calling through the lattices of leaves
At those wreathed windows
Where, flower-like, the gold light hangs,
Wise birds repeat,
As echoes from cool caves,
The words they're taught.

A wall of cactus guards the virgin sound
Of piano scales
Ringing the changes
In a small schoolroom,
And on the black keys
Hammering with the hard beak of woodpeckers
On a moss-grown tree.
From all around young ardent voices
Reiterate the aged sentiments,
While a brave few try the spiral stairs,
Spinning like blown smoke to the glittering stars,
Half-lost in the damp breath of clouds
That tarnish the gilt edges of their song.

Through the splintered stillness
Sounds like small animals
Creep from their holes,
And from a hundred various heights,
From terraces of all the shaking fields of leaves,
The frail ladders
On which our meaning climbs
Span the blue air
Until they touch the sodden ground.

. . . . . .

Music, that on the stooping sails of wind,
Drifting, divides the distance, and can bind
Those it has chosen with a supple string,
Keeping them motionless to feel her wing,
Can negative the constant turn of time
And make long minutes shorter than the chime
Of waters bruising the white foam of waves
Before whose rush the sea-gods seek their caves;
Thus, at the music beating through a wall
Tired limbs revive, and shadows seem the tall
And flashing figures walking by a lake;
Known faces, unknown bodies slowly shake
Their dancing skeletons to normal flesh,
And walking in warm light within a mesh
Of memories that follow on the scent;
The once-again-remembered wishes bent
On embraces, or the easier art of flight
Centre round persons crushed beneath the might
Of phrases blown like trumpets, but to fall
Deafened by loud sound, stifled by the pall
Of soaring wings too heavy for their weight;

The music, dying, ceases, and the mate
Of every big ambition faints away,
Gone are the dreams, the darkness lives, till day
With staring light rehearses all the ills
Poured down on us each morning from the hills.

But now, before ambition starts its reign
And crowns itself within the sleeping brain,
A fitting altar for a mocking rite,
The hours arrive which offer to our sight,
In place of sun motes in a dancing air,
The lively brilliance of crowds laid bare,
And, in the place of serenading winds,
A surfeiting of subtle sound, that binds
The plumage of the trees and makes them still,
While murmurs run as water from a hill
Down to the valleys where they form a flood,
And rising, fill the veins of trees with blood,
Break the quiet spell, and run their fire along
Thrilling the leaves until they shout the song
Of rolling river and of gliding cloud,
More moving than the sea, and still more proud ;
Of boughs fanning the liquid air until
The wind comes back and breathes into each quill,
And then, quite suddenly, the birds begin
Throwing their brilliant spirals through the thin
Clear pavers to the vaster vaults of air ;
White caravans of clouds are listening there ;
The murmurs are soft whispering of men
Drinking the evening fall of coolness, when
The dappled light gives intervals of shade
Arching the light-ribbed dark with shadows made

Of moving shapes, and lattices of green
That trace their sudden sharpness, where, between
Tall houses and the deep-diapered woods,
Dim voices meet, and mix their various moods.

The flickering darkness covers as a cloak
Those hidden there, when certain changes broke
The set calm, and lit the still air with fire
Before whose flames the old and ill retire ;
The beating blood gives wings that flash and lift
To bodies whose young signs of life they sift
From evidence and symbol of decay
To feel the freshened splendour of new day.

Rise from the ashes where you lay so long,
Stand up triumphant, resolute, and strong.
The cowering darkness is as oil to fire
Intended but to multiply your ire.
Your wings must carry you to leave the cloud
And take the treasure from its castle proud,
Building white bastions above the waves
To hide the icy heart within its caves ;
For bribe, the gold upon the glittering trees
Lies there for you, as honey for the bees ;
The streams and running currents of the air
Are path and roadway for your footstep there,
And walking them above the wide-stretched land
The flower scents reach their blossoms to your hand ;
And now to send a shiver through the leaves
And thrill with melody the gathered sheaves,
Touching the fields beyond the reach of sound

To light the gathered gold upon the ground,
The clouds dissolve and show a sea of glass,
Still islands, and the floating ships that pass.

On earth once more, the music guides your feet,
Annihilating distance till you meet.
The moment comes to don your first disguise
And posture it before the sightless eyes,
Vast imbecile mentality of those
Who cannot tell a thistle from a rose;
This is for others; but for one, alone,
The altered aspect and the change of tone;
For one alone; yet others in these hours
Show greater changes and more subtle powers.
They glide in carriages past flashing green
Fans, and dropping curtains, liquid with sheen
Of waters, echoing every shaft of light
That fills an avenue too long for sight
Until the gold spoke fits the wheel on high
Moving in majesty along the sky;
From lakes that flash like mirrors or like swords
The echoes send back shuddering sounds and words
And multiply the moving shafts and wells,
Fashion new glory and invent fresh spells
To crack the glass of silence with the tongues
That throw like fountains and have fire for lungs.
They come by water with a white sail, blown
Like a taut cloud, like a gaudy shell shown
Through clear water on the pale plains of sand
As a city with carved towers on gold strand;
Or float more gently, crossing a still world
Using their oars as wings, with wide sails furled,

Make the soft sound of feathers as they dip
To wave the water back and press the lip
Floating still further on the troubled glass
That shows its secrets, and the mountain's mass.
A wanton warmness breathes on them below
The shaking smoothness, and white bodies show
That ride the slight waves holding to the manes;
Men on galloping horses down the plains.
Clearer water shows the fine limbs that tempt
The dwellers in wild places, rough, unkempt;
If such there were who lived among these woods
Crowding upon the bank, they'd fire their moods
And carry a white body to the caves
To catch the cataracting force of waves,
And gratify the unaccustomed touch;
Soothe with cool snow of limbs the heat, of such
Blind, flower-like, followers who track the sun
And know the causeways where his feet have run
Treading through clear clouds the tree-tops, below
He dyes the leaves with brilliance to show
The glittering windows and the shining roofs;
Pavilions that tremble as his hoofs
Sound in the orchards where he stoops to hang
Gold apples on high trees through which there rang
Laughter like dropping water, till, sweet tears,
The rain showers fell to dissipate their fears;
Small suffering and short-lived pain distil
This elixir of happiness, and still
Among the crums and crystal gongs of rain
Voices are calling and we know the rain
Is ended, and the brilliant fruits begin
To grow to fullness and to paint their skin.

Daring the danger and the treacherous shore,
They swim above the never-plundered store
Of shadows, where the finished cup of sky
Contains the waters, and the hills so high,
They touch the trees that wave on the far bank,
And shake the mirrored stillness of their rank.
Green are the safest places in the grass
To hide your comfort from the feet that pass,
And little caves between the trees green dark
Give you their stillness, and no need to hark
For prying voices, while near music rings
To keep the people practising their wings,
For while they tread the tight-rope of the tune
And walk on air, through clouds, as if to prune
These flowers which grow in clusters high above
The leaf-marked waters, lying there to prove
The strength of silver, or the lure of gold
As night or day, with cowardly or bold
Appearance bribes with white flowers the waves
Or, with fierce countenance controls his slaves;
Others can rest motionless, apart,
Until the moment for their play can start;
In " caverns," " leaf-hung bowers," or " grots " they lie,
And live their pastorals before the shy
Pipes or piercing trumpets make this pretence
No longer binding, and no more a fence.
From other windows, other gods may lean,
Their sons mark space with intervals of clean
Waterfalls of rippling light, golden walls,
Protecting proud gods, echo through their halls
New signs and symbols acted in the air,

Unknown to us, but seen by clear eyes there ;
And from the windows each can watch his son
Leave Heavens of sparkling brilliance, to shun
The drifting gardens with sweet-breathing trees
Blown down the wide sky ; for they choose the lees
And sifted dregs of goodness where they find
Sweet fruits of conquest, and of loss, combined.
As soon as ever the deep woods are still,
The hollow valley, and the hanging hill
Murmur with liquid voices, till in turn
The woods reply with fiery sounds that burn
And cleanse the dim night, for the gods to reach
Trees rising like green cliffs above a beach.
The carriages arrive, release their load
Beneath green arches, where the grass is mowed
Smooth as the sea, and through its depth as clear ;
The leaves, like men on cliffs, can gaze down sheer
And watch, beneath the dancing boughs of waves,
People leaving carriages like caves,
Step into the sunlight, for a moment blind,
Dazed by the dropping splendour that they find ;
They stagger like men in the far-flung spray
Of the shivered waves on a stormy day,
But the foam falling like snow down the air
Is dust in wide beams of the sun, whose hair
Gilds the blue zenith that he leaps along
With lion-like limbs and loud voice so strong.

Two Clowns' Psychology

In hyphenated lighting
the hoardings hammer a small word of hope
upon the motionless wide sky
whose walls are pitched upon the far-off hills
and whose torn edges
worry the molten glowing sea—

Set in these squares of blue or red
fierce screens for those who need a rest,
their tired eyes on the winking leaves
that rise like bubbles
in the stream of wind
and, dying
part dry lips
and sigh their noiseless songs
white sun above them
with its coat of crystal
shredded into shuddering blue;
these two consistently amusing men
sit, crumpled, on the tin edges
of half a dozen planes of light
like a tramp's bundle
hurled down in drunken fury
on the trampled metal
of one night's tenement of parched, dry field.

X. "If I read an evening paper,
turning pages of advertisement,
the smudged, wet print scratches the eye;

if I look up I run my glance
to coloured tin and pasted hoardings
building us a patent sky.
Is the man who makes this gifted,
is he dowered with divinity
that he prints praise upon the clouds ?
Our life must be a meal of Sundays
swallowing advice and prices,
mute and obeisant before his statement,
kneeling for a daily blessing,
answering on printed postcards,
agreeable to our prostitution."

Y. " I think you take such things too seriously.
Suppose now we are on the stage,
I see profusion, flowering trees,
painted water in the background ;
if you sat there simply reading
people would laugh like the children watching you."

X. "At once you start exaggerating.
Why should I be on the stage ?
Why should they laugh at me more than you ?
Can you never realise, I want to know
why the lettering is ugly, and the colour bad,
the woodwork moulded—the allotment sun-scorched?
when they might found better type, use good colours,
metal for wood, and grow cool trees
to drop their sweetness on the passing crowds ;
also, are these artists, even now,
to draw things finer for the public eye."

Y. " Yes, but I like to think about you on the
stage ;
magnifying objects, as they are.
Sooner than have good posters
would I satirize these here,
drawing out humour with decaying teeth ;
satisfy a curiosity :
I like the way the words can answer,
calling to each other from across the square,
they are noisy like crashing waves
crested with colour ;
some of them stand alone
like rocks, foam splashed,
with stunted trees shaking in the hoarse-voiced wind ;
they are the islands in a tumbling sea
very much reminding me of Korin's waves."

X. "Affection, unadulterate ;
can't you see they make a world
with names alone as symbols ?
I suggested planting trees
to drop down sweetness on the dusty crowds,
but very soon the sight of trees will die,
and new advice for sunshades will usurp their space ;
they'll write a name to summon to the mind
the smell of flowers, cool snow on the sun-soaked hills,
and in the place of wind a fan will turn
trying as a wounded bird to leave the ground
and hide in the clouds that now are lit
showing new pictures to a gaping world.
Such is the world they make ; the buildings stand

ST. JOHN FISHER COLLEGE LIBRAR

roofless, waiting for a gang of slaves
driven with whips and torture to the task;
I see them cringing on the lofty ladders
bowed with the load of bricks they carry;
up at the top they stop for breath,
and with a last heave tread the platform
dizzily looking down the cliff-steep wall.
Then the bricks are seized from them,
they scurry off,
and go down the ladder like a falling bird.
From a glass-less window a bald-head leans out,
tallying the windows with the avenues
that lead through arches of reflected light,
varying its splendour with the play of clouds
driven along high arches in the air
like chariots on the wide walls of a town;
till where the tunnels open to the sky
from the high windows you can see,
not flower-beds, but the gaudy sails of flowers
dancing on a lake to the soft tune of wind
among the islands where the winds live,
building frail palaces among the trees,
with ladders down to the sunlit fields of sea
and spiral stairways to the terraces of cloud,
whose cool pavement they delight to tread
among the playing fountains of soft rain.

Then distant windows answer back with gold,
sounding an echo to the evening bells;
the bands are playing in the crowded parks;
this half-built barracks has released its slaves.
In spite of the beauty of the evening air,
the crowd is ugly, and the band is bad,

but I decorated nature till it reached your pitch;
and our ultimate imaginings are much the same."

Y. "My theatricals can mask the object,
making the surfaces of such things agreeable,
where, *you*, forget the ugliness, leave out the mar,
and so progress by leaps in place of strides;
I am fully conscious, but I want to change it,
where you can forget and force your mind
to spin fresh splendour out of the frayed silk.
What I mean by *theatrically*, when I ventured to suggest
the laughing you would cause and its reward to follow,
consists more of a forced exaggeration.
If everyone was quite as funny as you are
there would be no laughter, or a different standard
by which to judge the cardinal points of beauty.
Here is precisely the question of new values,
new standards of good and bad, new scales of beautiful and ugly.
For example:
You might be working all the summer at a seaside town;
playing twice nightly to a holiday crowd.
It would be a hot afternoon; you will drop your waistcoat,
light another cigarette, and leave your room.
It takes four minutes walking to the pier
down a public garden where the seats are full.
Picnics are over, and they feel too glutted
even to watch you, as you walk along.
Then there is a turnstile, and the sea comes out

barking at the pier-supports and lashing at the sand,
above it half a mile of planks and a shrill band.
This is better than the sights we see
sitting here, looking at the dusky hoardings.
To continue—perhaps it was too hot that afternoon,
but in the evening, at any rate, you have your chance,
then you can pretend to be just anything you like."

X. " If I say I'm Julius Cæsar,
do you think they will believe me ?
Can I convince myself from cockney,
and bad physique of the stage soldiers ?
If someone sneezes in the middle of my speech
everybody laughs and I forget my part."

Y. " These, on the contrary, are just the times of stress,
strategic moments that decide the battle.
Someone sneezes. Parry to their feint.
Imitate them, show them that your sneeze is louder."

X. " But why have you got this mania for the stage ?
I've never acted since I was at school.
It seems to me most foolish of all follies,
the greatest space and distance from reality.
Even you agree with me about the universal ugliness,
then you suggest the stage as remedy,
and think that I could cure it by sporadic acting."

Y. "A travelling agapena, an earthly shrine on wheels

drawn round the country by high-stepping horses,
that is my notion of a death to dullness,
and if not with horses by a thundering motor
drumming its persistence on the giggling air.
Persistence, and I mean the everlasting life;
wind in loose sails embodying their speed
suddenly set forth to cut the rolling waves,
like a swift-flowering meteor on a golden cord
held by loose line but growing to its fullness.
Can you imagine this swift growing flower,
trained in position, but with impulse of a fountain
rocket-rushing to cool its gilded wing in clouds?
This is the force by which its feet march
up the windows of the bare-white sky;
this, then, is the flower that shows as a meteor,
throws as a fountain, gleams as a rocket,
and this flower is the doomed continuance of life.
Giggling air, I said, and this will yield its secrets,
and whisper them behind the canvas wings,
softly breathe it as the voice of a prompter.
Has music never sounded in the evening wind
trickling disconsolately through the woods,
like a water-carrier working with a broken urn,
that you never knew the sacred power of laughter:
broad grins watching from a red-brick wall,
on steady elbows while they watch the slaughterman
striking down the animals they eat next day;
and then an acid drop and then a well-known tune.
Drumming its persistence on the giggling air,
I said,
and, in fact, the rolling drums should rattle in the
square

before a thick curtain that no eye can pierce,
and trumpets shall sound out from all the square-set
towers
to signal the triumphant hour when the sun is dead,
when the gardens are lit and little laughters ring
from wide-flung windows under the trees.
Persistence, I said—I mean the giggling air,
rather I should say I mean the giggling drums,
or rolling drums: persistence—and I mean the . . ."

X. " . . . persistent air ? . . ."

Y. " No, no; persistence, and I mean the
giggling air;
I meant to talk about the everlasting life,
until you muddled me and made me stop!
Now I can go no further. . . .
I shall go home, and you can walk about!"

. . . . . .

Ever so wearily they left their seat,
the shadow of the hoardings, the light of the town,
built gates and fences on all sides.
Y went through a door that opened wide:
and *X* to a railing that he clambered over.
Now they walked among the mouldering tombs,
at back of the advertisements, behind the hoardings,
stumbling at the gibbets where the posters hung—
X showed in a pool of light,
oozing from a crack through which he looked in
passing.
The arena, sandless, dusty with light,
gaped there, grinning with its teeth, the lettering.

There he saw the circus for such fools to play in,
lit up, listening for their nonsense with quick ears,
and, when they had bled enough, were driven away.
Back through the darkness, till the streets began,
as far from *Y* as ships can be at sea,
X climbed stairs and lit his aureole of gas.

First Variation on a Theme by George Peele

" God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees."
George Peele.

I WAS lying in the dappled shade,
the lute hung lifeless in my lap,
when God stepped out of a moving cloud
to tread the tops of mulberry trees.

He hushed the trumpets, furled His flags,
and made His angels wave their wings ;
thus was blown the pleasant wind
that wafted Him within my sight.

And when I saw Him through the leaves,
I knew He trod His winepress there ;
the nectar sliding from the mountains
did not please Him like those berries.

I touched my strings, and God looked down ;
He smiled on me, and gave me wings,
but e'en His plumes had not the glow
the fire of fruit lit in the air.

All the while He kept his pace
And marched on in the whizzing wind.
I ran behind with feathered feet
and followed Him as best I could.

Had I gone quite far enough,
we should have reached to Black-man's land,
where ebon faces show out clear
against the brooks and crystal waves.

But dying daylight told the hour
and warned me I had best turn back.
I wept at parting, then I smiled,
and knew the purpose of these plumes.

For with their help I bridged the air;
I perched upon the silent sill,
and from this height my lute will sound,
and I shall catch the whispered call.

Second Variation

" God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees."
George Peele.

CAN a white wave its coolness keep
and break beneath the hot sun's stare;
will incense-trees for ever weep,
or do they too our changes share?

Flowers climb on the trees but once
to cloud those Heavens with their stars;
the fountains need a melting ounce,
a load of snow, to start their wars.

The blossoms and the leaping springs
ask for kindness ere they start;
an eagle grows strong with its wings,
and cannot prey without this part.

The wine lies in the grape until
a plucking hand can take its might;
barred is the window, mute the sill,
unless you climb to grasp the sight.

So, as I played my lute and sang,
I saw God in the mulberry trees.
His angels clapped their wings. There rang
a pleasant wind that bore the bees.

Still swifter to the flowers that flamed
and shone like lamps in deepest dark,
and all the unicorns we tamed
ran to cool themselves and hark.

For God was singing as He went,
pressing nectar for His drink,
and for the coolness that this lent
the beasts came thirsting to the brink.

But I ran up the ladder fast,
rattling the windows with my notes;
and, as I played, a splendour passed,
and laughter on the wind still floats.

Third Variation

" God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees."
George Peele.

So cool my spring, my waves so still
they lie, as dead, with glassy face,
breathe but on them to give me life;
and while this mirror keeps your breath
my foam is born, my leaves begin.

Run, shepherd, quicker than my fall,
and swim to cool me at my side,
for, now I live again, I burn.
You must quench me with cold fruit
or else I parch and fade again;
only give them into my hand
and I will grow you a golden tree.

But how will it help me, your golden tree?
I have no need of it for my lambs,
nor can I swim with it to the shore.
If I cut its timbers down,
and make a golden ship for myself,

lamb's wool will make a sail for me
and the winds of the air will give me speed.
The waters here aren't wide enough,
I need a space as void as the sky,
to tack in the wind and sail far out
or, like a cloud, stay still at anchor.

Be not cruel to lay me low,
and leave me burning at the water's brim.
I hidden lie among the boughs
till you try each perch to find me;
but, at each look, I drift like rain.

This is the promised tree. Its leaves,
its stems more flashing-bright than glass
are one, in growing from your fountain foot.

Mrs. H. . . . or a Lady from Babel

" SPRECHEN sie Deutsch ? ` Parlez-vous Francais ?
Parlate Italiano ? Dearest Child ! "

Mrs. H. would float the words
As jewels from her sunshade,
Which to my infant eyes
Seemed as the fountain of all frankincense.
Beneath the twittering shadows
She leaned out, looking in one's eyes,
Her body perfectly enmeshed
Beneath the clinging scales of gold,
And all her landau
Filled with the falling jewels—
The melting of the million bells
Set ringing when the wind breathes
And the blue spaces of the sky
Are filled with shaking leaves—
Divine wisdom as a freehold gift
From black-gloved hands—
The feast of untold tongues !

On a bridge one evening
From behind the nearest house
The sunset air came suddenly alive with sound,
The throbbing from a mandoline fell forth
As the long lines of water when a boat floats by.
This ended, she was asked for coppers
In Italian.

" Coachman, drive on !
Mes meilleurs sentiments à maman,
Mes meilleurs. . . ."

Week-ends

BLOW your long horn,
red cloud,
before the wide-thrown gates
and fresh-lit braziers of heaven;—
to move the snowy mane
like mist above the plain
and thus uncover
lawns like level seas,
and houses cool as trees
run round by balconies
that lead from house to house
and shew the sky against
a web of shivering leaves
struck through with gold.

The gardener must drop his fruit
and running down the ladder from the tree
must bow respectfully
to Mrs. . . .
who walks into her Paradise
like a young deer playing in its park;—
and I must enter as a friend
to watch her wise commandments—

"The roses must be sprayed,
and judging from the apples in your hand
a thousand wasps have dug there."
"Yes, M'um."

" Yes ! I think so ;
and the borders are not neat enough,
these stalks again are short enough,
why aren't they longer ? "
" Yes ! M'um."

" Well then, you see,
I want the tree-tops trimmed,
and then at tennis
one can watch the steamers
through Lord Dodo's chimneys."
" Exactly."
" Yes ! M'um."

"And growing in the beds,
embroidering the paths,
gazing in each other's eyes
wherever there is water
I've laid
like this one."
" I see."
" Yes ! M'um."

" Hold it ! " " Yes ! M'um."

" Whilst I show this gentleman
the way I've dug the lake
just lying where it nets the houses
and reflects them with their window-boxes."
" Fascinating."
" Yes ! M'um."

" What do you think my husband
waits for in the train ? "
" Tell me ! "
" M'um."

" Every yard the train comes
nearer to the station
he's thinking of the view ;
steps on to the platform,
leaves the station,
turns the corner,
and it's there before him."
" M'um."

"A moment, m'um !
Miss Argentine was telling that her trees . . ."
" You see it is no selfish pleasure,
not a private toy——"
" May I speak a moment, m'um. . . ."
" Others share the joy."

That moment there came
ringing through the leaves,
shaking the canopies
and falling from the branches like soft snow,
the voice of some one from a balcony :

Mrs. . . . was listening
to recognise the call
that deals a death-blow to each afternoon.
With but a brief farewell
this lady left us,

and all the while
we saw her white dress
glistening through the boughs,
and heard her footsteps
leave the lawn
to sound upon the gravel,
till she left a railing of gold spears between
us;
while even then
we heard her answer
mocking questions lowered through the air.

Extracts from "Bird-actors"

THAT splendid charlatan, Sebastian Mondor,
Sets up his quivering trestles,
Across the crowd they stretch
Their twisted arches, splendider
Than the slow palaces of air
That screen the sun's gold stare,
Or, when he moves in state,
With dropped wine, sweet exhalation
Smooth the gay arch he traverses.
Two feathers in their hair,
Comedians strut the sheer edge
Above the foaming crowd
Loose sleeves and trousers flapping with the wind.
Through the crowd
The tremors of their movements run;
Till the furthest feel,
Dashed in their faces,
The fierce blossoms of each whistling parrot-cry.

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Two Variations on Themes out of Zarathustra

I. LAUGHING LIONS WILL COME

Nietzsche.

THE prophet from his desert cave
Listens to the sound of water
Lapping with tongues the fringes of the sand.
Young flowers open for the bees;
A roadway for the yellow sun
Climbs from the hills into the fallow sea.
The scented bells hold golden sound;
And the strong lion drinks the salted waves,
Cooling his mane within the sudden foam.
The bee skirts tremblingly the shining dew,
Looking for honey in the golden dells,
While the lion shakes the loud hills again.
This early morning there may lie some gold
Forgotten when the light was fled;
To-day the great beams may shine
On opened caves where run swift rivers
Shooting their arrows at the swordless sea,
And blind to the sun whose shining armour
Shows in the sky among the clouds he charges,
Driving them across a wind-walled field
Into the shelter of the towering hills.
Honey may be hiding in the waking flowers,
The man in armour hides behind the gold,
The strongest waves, far off, are snow.
These are dangers to the daring robber,

The armoured impotence of man-made deity,
And crowd-thick, barking heads, on the lion-like sand,
Gathering honey in the rolling desert.
Such are the perils to a fasting prophet—
Dog-like men, and men-like gods.
Many doors lie open into his cave,
For lion-springs, flash of the surging sea,
And dogs that bark to bar him from his palm.
To leave his cave, and walk on the burning sand,
He passes the sun that bridles his yellow mane,
And the roaring crowd, an ocean of clashing waves.
Tight-rope dancers run over the roofs
And fall in the market-place—
Raising a laugh,
It looks like walking on the rainbow's bridge
Among the clouds, behind the windows;
There below fly the flags of smoke
Waving possession that the Lord's at home
And works, a creator, in his own fair garden
Where trees spring as fountains, lift into the air,
Their branches steadied in the height with wings
That quiver in the stream of wind,
And by the cold are frozen as they drop,
Before they foam again as fiery darts
Piercing the soft breasts of the pool,
They tremble above the water, bird-like, with flashing feathers.
Is Zarathustra armoured that he goes
Leaving his cave, down mountains,
Fording swift rivers, to attain the town?
The tight-rope dancers had turned back again

Waving their wands to balance a sharp curve,
They stagger as a child who learns his walk
Using a crutch in place of human hand,
Holding his own high above the head
To guide him on an easy, level path—
Guitars are played by men upon high stilts
Stepping over gardens to keep up the tune
Because the dancers only move with music.
With creaking leg and hollow tread
They walk among the houses, chase the rope,
And whisper warning while they play more loud.
Below, the cripples lean out from their corners,
And a dwarf or two will strain his little stride
To run like a child holding a strong kite.
This is the magnet drawing every eye
When Zarathustra comes behind the curtain of the gold horizon,
Walks into the town through the deserted gates.
Judges are holding back the wheel of time,
Fitting the spokes to figures on a watch
As they follow the competitors on airy paths.
He walks beneath an archway, hears his tread,
Multiplied and echoed in this empty hall,
And then is alone again on empty street.
Stepping out firm, he starts to sing,
Turns the corner and is in the square,
His song a loud river that now joins the sea.
Who will he first step up to,
Take by the shoulder,
To break down his stare ?
Will he stoop down to a dwarf and shout,
Ask him to run across the square

And beg the Mayor to stop festivities a moment?
Is it too dangerous to hold a stilt,
Shouting out loud into the noisy air
To attract attention from a wooden giant?
If he holds a stilt and stops the music
Down will tumble all the tight-rope dancers,
And the men who play the mandolines cannot stand still.
Shout as loud as he possibly can,
He will never drown the music
And the roaring crowds.
One course, one only is there to his hand;
Wonder and marvel are the joys to-day,
And this is the course that he must tread.
God goes on a cloud,
But the dancers walk there,
And the crowd shout louder than the singing of His angels.
Thinking a moment, Zarathustra stopped,
Stroked his beard, and hesitated
Till his mind lit up;
Without a cry, without a word,
He started running down the square,
Raced ever quicker till he reached a wall.
No sooner touched it
Than he turned again,
Running ever faster than the way he came.
Reached the starting point,
Turned once more
Raising a dust to hide his face.
The men on stilts looked down like birds
Who watch for prey in the glistening grass,

And dropped the instruments from their hands ;
The dancers when the music stopped
Swayed on their ropes
And fell like stars,
Flashed through the air with trailing sparks
And opened on the ground
Their clumsy petals.
The dwarfs and cripples raised themselves,
Came from their corners into dazzling sun
And ran among the crowd to start them running.
Soon Zarathustra showed in front.
Just behind were the men on stilts,
After them the able-bodied tan,
Followed by cripples and the bounding dwarfs ;
Half of them are running from right to left.
While Zarathustra showed from left to right.
Soon he caught the laggards and the limping halt
And ran among their crutches
By the jumping dwarfs.
This time, turning down a narrow street,
He ran into a house
And climbed the shaking stairs.
Out from the window on a roof he stepped
While the people ran up stairways
Like a flood inside a well ;
Down a drain-pipe on the ground again
He heard the tumbling ceilings
And the roofs fall in.
While the survivors took the road again
Zarathustra ran out from a gate once more
Till he reached the burning sand,
And fell back breathless,

Blind from the dust
And dead with running.
Clouds of dust still rose from the town,
Blurred murmurs
And the tread of hundreds running.
"I won attention by my rose.
Shouting was vain, and had I showed
Floating above them on a cloud
They would have guessed me lowered from a tower
Treading the yielding clouds like a man through snow
So I had to run among them like a wind;
But for all my running they have never seen
The stride of my footsteps,
But thought themselves
Each in each other to contain the cause.
My years of meditation in a cave
Gave more hope for another visit,
But now that they run themselves around the town
Nothing will stop them but themselves alone.
If someone with young lungs
Blew out through a trumpet the last chance for man,
It would be a feature in their entertainment.
I must look at the sun,
Who sinks to die
And pours his treasures to the sea to keep,
Guarding them with tempests and a change of tide.
So that in sinking to the sunless caves,

Where they lie to light the darkness till he comes again,
The poorest fisherman has golden oars
To row with over the echoing waves,
Suddenly shaking their yellow manes
To sound new music to the gods below;
And when the gold is taken from the oars
The music ceases and the waves are mute
Till a new wind whispers from the thirsty trees
And the fisherman can hoist his sail."

II. PARADE VIRTUES FOR A DYING GLADIATOR

For safety, hear this, common mortals!
March with the others—swing your arms—
don't step too fast—don't reach so far.
. . . Laggards are devoured by wolves:
if you but reach the enemy first
an eagle from the iron air
will soar steep down, and peck your eyes.
Be the first to steal down fire
and you shall lie on the aching rock,
a threatening wing your roof and shade.

The scaffold stands and totters in the wind,
a cage for the light—a platform through the clouds:
remark—a scaffold and a scaffolding,
a terrace for death—and bars for young birds.

At the top he stoops to work,
the shadows give him longer limbs,
he strides on stilts to tie the ropes,
only string can hold the floors
and keep the telescopic roofs apart.
A little rubbing of dry hands,
snatches of sawdust on the floor,
then he nods for the fanfare like a God.

A screech of trumpets—before we guess,
before we know what he stands there for,
the planks split up, they bend like rushes,

the frightened birds fly off, he tumbles,
falls through the brittle lights that snap
and give like waves when a meteor falls.

Now he crumples on the sand,
let him collect himself, spit blood and words.
They flood the arena—cover the sands—
The beakèd war-boats raise their sails,
like birds they tack in the wind.

The second philosopher appeared,
proudly holding a ladder.
" Wait," he was saying, " till we're near enough,
then watch me making for another world."
He did not climb. He lined the deck,
the sailors helped him, charged with their ram,
the other ship was staggered, helpless.
They lay alongside, near enough,
over with the ladder, he climbed along,
his little weight decided things,
the two boats went apart, the hooks,
the claws of his ladder were wrenched out,
he lay like a man between wild horses.
One arm came off, and then a leg.
They picked him into a boat, rowed off,
drained out the water, and when the sand was dry,
there he lay close to the other,
the two philosophers together again.

The third put up a horn to his mouth.
" I deny," he roared, " a better world,
but I hope a stranger, not a nicer heaven.

Also your fault—and not my choice."
And then he disappointed the crowd,
fell, like a log, without one struggle,
killed by poison, drunk in secret.

" As my turn," the fourth man shouted,
" I'll walk on stilts through the drying water,
collect the bodies, carry them out,
and give them to the crowd for burial."
Then he began tremendous tests,
beat one stilt with an axe to break it,
looked through the eyeholes of his visor,
bared an arm to feel his sword,
Then on one leg his whole weight leaning,
he strapped his other leg to the stilt,
knocking it on to a wall to test it.
Both legs finished, he cannot stand,
he has to stamp and stagger around,
a tireless peripatetic.
They hand him helmet, sword, and trident,
and, last of all, the trumpet that he holloes down.
Now he is ready to start, steel clad,
and shod with hoofs of sounding wood.
He grips the trumpet with his teeth,
bares the trident, holds the net.
The first he comes to still is breathing.
He lances him with the trident, lifts him,
opens the net for the crumpled body.
The second man, legless, armless,
lies there helpless.
Little is left for the wide-tongued trident.

The man who drank the poison, died,
but still the venom lives within him.
He is spiked with the same three lances,
and the same points transfixing both,
killed the other who was breathing,
but being limbless could not move.
The weight of the two together stifled,
strained, and made this gladiator gasp—
to right himself, he must stand still,
he stumbled, drew to his height,
and fell.

Next we saw one stilt come out,
and wave above the shallow water.
He disengaged it, dropped it off,
the other leg was doubled up,
but he could sit knee deep in water,
and use the floating stilt as a crutch.
His trident stuck up out of the sand,
the visor and the trumpet still were his:
helmet for head, and tube for voice,
enough material for martial music.
The drums were rattling for his death,
but there he saw, and did not die.

He had the only pair of stilts,
and whilst the water ebbed from him,
leaving this monster on the sand,
he can string out platitudes,
and make a dying actor's speech.

" How do we differ from dull soldiers ? "
These were the words he started with.
" Where is the gulf for us to jump,
where are the stairs for me to climb,
so that I ride a horse, a cloud,
and rule the azure fields of air ?
Why do I want these ; is it vain
to try and open gates of glass ?
They are transparent, is it vanity
that I wish for men to see men
ride beneath these gates, and glitter,
shine the other side from them ?
Now they stand, where then I stood,
they see me where I nothing saw.
But when I came behind the glass,
the light to show me dazzled me,
now I grope through a golden fog,
I stumble on the beams as stones,
I never see the road I walked :
lamps blind me ; blatant shouting deafens me ;
the more I stumble, more they cheer.

I suggest these virtues to all dying gladiators.
Never bury your rival's body, let their corpses taint
the air,
do not put them in caves for the relic hunters,
but leave them to the vultures, they will quicken the
decay.
This virtue I learnt, first, to-day.

Your enemies must feel both edges of the sword ;
they shall be laggards for all hungry wolves ;

and prey for the vultures if they die too soon :
this is why I build my house
using tombstones from damp fields,
that is why I said to-day
I'd gather the bodies and give them to you,
letting you dig and hide them for yourselves,
and keep you busy, fill your minds,
so that while I stand in the glare
you watch me not, but grope with your hands,
running the sand through greedy fingers.

Now I have light more prying than the sun,
no audience so nervous as the fainting stars
who gently withdraw, but watch behind the dark ;
none are there, spying.
So you see I have gathered my rivals,
Given them over to you, occupied your attention,
now there is full light for me, and no rivalry,
alone I can work my wonders, alone in my own hours
of day."

But then he worked his own greatest wonder,
his head dropped, knees sank, and he rolled into
the water.

That is a virtue, but not a parade one :
Soldiers should run away to live another day.
Good as far as he went.
Good to gather and expose the corpses,
but weak of him to die, knee deep in water.
I should admire him more, sitting on his box
or washed ashore on a querulous hencoop.

This much I like, that he walked on stilts,
that the rôle he chose never let him stop,
that he could not stand, but must stamp ahead.

It seemed to me, if my turn should come,
that I would not take the sand, scour out,
and clear the threshold of the Statue dust ;
any more than build with the dead, mute, stone ;
that I would not snap the fallen swords,
or sharpen their points to help me,
neither slay the old, or build the new religion,
neither beg the streets, or live on an altar.

Parade these virtues, dying gladiators !
Beware of the final, finishing copestone.
Hang many masks from your belt,
but the last one awkwardly stops your disguise,
until you break the string, to take the bead—
And tumble the walls of your Paradise.
If you cage your growing trees,
no birds will float through them and sing ;
if there are walls, you cannot watch
the fields that slope down till they hold the deep sea.
Between yourself and the waves there lie
all that divides and walls you in.
A Paradise is dangerous to hunt through
for the rare tigers among the tropical trees ;
if you had never attempted this,
you had never been lying wounded now.

. . . . . .

An icy wind interrupted this flow,
a fall of stage snow fluttered from the roof.

We were aghast to see the gladiator
rolling the snow in his trembling hands—
Not to soothe him—for the next scene was a fight on
sledges—
but the gladiator finished several handfuls
and then he threw them into the audience.
It was a very irritating dust,
and broke in clouds, till everybody sneezed.
So I took my hat and coat and went,
letting them sneeze and seeing them weep—
and I turned this thought in my mind.
Surely the gladiator threw this snow
wanting their tears for two good reasons:
" First," said he, " I'll have them cry,
their tears shall flow for my timely death;
secondly, their tears shall hide and veil
until with smarting they cannot see:
and then they'll miss my proud successor."

Dr. Donne and Gargantua

" Run and catch a falling star,
get with child a mandrake root."—*John Donne.*

SHALL arrow-root and Benger's food
furnish us fancies for our mood ?
The mandrake, and the witches' sabbath
may yield more fruitful aftermath.
Gargantua and Doctor Donne
swallowed their pills like other folk,
they laid a wager, neither won,
yet neither underwent the yoke.
Gargantua said he would contrive
to get a mandrake root with child.
Doctor Donne had said he'd strive
to snare a meteor, wet and wild.
And so they set out from the Alps
which showed more white than old men's scalps ;
they shivered to their knees in snow,
and waited for the sign to blow.
Their view embraced all seas and lands,
the devil tempted them to leap,
if they relied on wings, not hands,
no longer should they stray like sheep ;
they should go forth as eagles, keen
to blind the sunlight with swift sheen ;
like lions they should walk abroad
till silence trembled when they roared.

Spurning this offer with just pride,
they opened maps and looked intent,
the way they chose was hot and dried,
without the ease that promise lent.

A bugle broke the stillness ;
ineffectual, and almost muted ;
quickly shaking hands, they started
making down the mountain side ;
first they walked together, later,
when they came upon a river,
Doctor Donne crossed over quicker,
leaving on the other bank
poor Gargantua the fatter,
slower walker of the pair.
Say good-bye to Doctor Donne,
I choose Gargantua protagonist
and lift my hero to the pedestal ;
I shall wheel him on his car,
like a tiger he shall pass among the frightened trees,
the arms of waves shall hold him and shall move him,
he will be a sea-god dying on the waters ;
I shall halt, and in the public square
he will be a totem to the kneeling crowd,
a fœtus in a belly, a god upon an altar,
a mirror for perfection of the unborn race.
I shall shout something as follows :

" I am not come with elephants,
nor can I cure you of disease ;

but here is Gargantua, the giant,
the trumpet at God's lips
to blow my orders to the winds who run for me:
not only this, but a mirror
flatter than sea, less misty than the sky,
for the sun to hang over.
I like to think of him watching my friend,
to catch the weakness that he wears himself,
and mend his movements from Gargantua's style.
Soon, too soon, the other stars will burn
and forge sharp swords to kill the sun.
Pray to him until he falls in his armour,
and all the time know that my friend is important;
when the hot light is dead, then will your hour have
come,
send him ambassador, ask for his help,
he will find out a means, and will direct your feet,
life will come back again, darkness will die.
Gargantua is here to-day
to get a mandrake root with child,
over the hills not far away
I want you to think of Doctor Donne
walking the world to net a falling star.
A fair wager, and I hope you'll help him.
To get a mandrake root with child
would solve the problem of your flesh;
if Gargantua succeeds
the sexual problem may be somehow settled;
to-day I won't say more than this.
You must think for yourselves of the fresh delights;
but a word of warning;
remember, please, that my friend, Gargantua,

sings beneath a window when he can't find the stairs,
my advice is lock your doors
and send your daughters to their beds,
Gargantua is quick to seize them.
I will speak of Donne when he comes this way."

So I made Gargantua get up his speed.
He came quite quickly down to the plains,
but I lost him in crossing a little wood,
thinking too deeply of the words I'd say
in introduction to his keen campaign.
It seems Gargantua stole away
hid behind the trunks of trees,
crawled along the hollows.
I blew my bugle in vain
down the valleys,
getting more breathless till I touched a road,
where I stopped for a moment,
looking and breathing ;
I pretended to be coughing
when some peasants passed.
As soon as they turned a bend
off I had gone again ;
now that I thought it safe,
I bugled once more,
I blew like anything into the town
with the shrill welcome of my own fanfare.
But they were all asleep,
barred with shut windows,
and I drowned in the darkness,
was lost in obscurity,
fell down, fatigued, on the pavement and slept.

Fatal weakness, to let slip
the firm control I exercise,
for should I sleep, then should Gargantua
he only speaks when I'm away,
and only acts when I'm asleep.
I woke, and thought of Doctor Donne,
then of Gargantua with a shock,
realising it was still dark
and something had woken me from my
dreams.

Gargantua left me in the wood,
he hid behind the trunks of trees,
crawled along the hollows
and lay behind the hedges while he heard my blasts—
Then, as the darkness fell,
into the town he walked, mocking me.
I suppose he mistook my obscurity,
never suspecting what there was to hide ;
so he dropped his slow, wobbling gait,
walked briskly, swinging his arms,
straight through the town,
and, in the middle, he stopped to shout.
There was, immediately, a certain confusion,
people came pouring from the dancing halls ;
and a mob surged round him,
trying to listen.
Then he remembered to be mystical,
and all of them grovelled on their knees together ;
but he carried things too far,
and spoke to them as only I can do.
It was just at this juncture that I stood up, stretched

and made my way to the noise I heard.
I was half minded what to do with him,
and, as I arrived, he had broached his mission.
The mandrake was too much for them,
I don't know why they thought it worse
than offering marriage to their daughters.
Trouble began,
the first stone flew across the air
and struck me,
then I half regretted being there.
We all started off in an instant,
I saw Gargantua far along a street,
open a door, and run inside the house.
Unluckily for all concerned,
my hero made himself at home,
professed affection for the daughter,
locking her, and himself, upstairs.
Well, he must look after himself,
and I left him, jumped the wall, swam the ditch,
ran, right deep into a wood, and slept.

Next morning—how absurd it seems that I should
share their little day—
I started off, at sunrise, for the West ;
but not before I'd climbed a tree
and listened for Gargantua's voice
to crack the stillness and the earthen bowl.
In vain.

Doctor Donne we parted from across the stream,
and now we chase his feet along the bank.
For a time he saw Gargantua across the river

as he wobbled in and out among the trees and bridges.
I've lost the reins, we three are separate,
it often happens in such hilly country.
You can shift for yourselves, I confess myself,
I would sooner than not be out of your way.
I've made no speeches, told no fortunes,
but, as far as I can, I'll watch your feats.

Donne walked on till daylight fled
and thoughts of sleep came into his head,
while he watched the starry sky
till a sudden spark lit up his memory.
Walking the world to net a falling star—
and yet the gold he sought now found him sleeping.
He heard far voices, feared no danger,
and knew they were not plotting for his elixir.
The fruit they look for, hangs from trees
and drops, to lift an echo from the hollow mines
whose gold they wash in water, and subdue with fire
before they let it smile upon the sun.
" But mine," thought Donne, " shines out from the nets,
grows plumper, shielded from the worrying winds
that float like birds to peck my fruit ;
and all the wires, the yielding scales,
the nets that give for growing, are of better gold.
If I could catch an apple as it falls away,
I should not need to dig and find my treasure."
This is Donne ; you've heard Gargantua

preach his mission from my pulpit,
and I have sketched the speeches I've intended.
If Donne is precious, then Gargantua is prudish.
I left Gargantua locked in with the daughter,
and now we spy on Donne who counts the glittering stars.
He numbered more than the biggest lapful,
forgot his counting, and drifted into sleep :
not far away Gargantua slumbers,
fondling the girl he kidnapped, who enjoyed his violence.
All of them asleep, and so was I.

How did Gargantua escape disaster ?
Waking in the morning, much refreshed and young,
Gargantua's stratagems took shape again.
" You are my daughter, and my wife, in one ;
I shall tell the people of my God-like find.
The child of your parents with an added grace,
my holy paternity is also yours :
if their conception, it was my idea.
You shall be my priestess ; they shall pray to you.
And all the while beneath this cloak,
I can come back again, a ball of lightning,
and sleep away the pleasure of our holy meeting."
Then he unlocked the door, and spoke outside.
Of course, in a moment they were at his mercy,
grovelling and praying all along the street.
The father and the mother were the first to greet him,
and when he claimed their daughter, they at once agreed.

" I shall leave your daughter, till I call for her,"
and then he smiled on her, and shook hands with
them both.
What can I do to pay Gargantua,
make him suffer for his boldness ?

He ran downstairs, unbarred the door,
bowed to the window, waved farewell.
" Remember the mandrake ; what I told you,
problems it may help to settle.
I propose we leave your daughters,
let your sons crusade with me."
At his words the young men started,
met outside the city walls ;
bugles rang, sharp wind through leaves,
the golden stars were gathered in the fields,
they lay among the lawns and blessed the stillness,
their mothers and their sisters bore the helmets,
felt the plumes.
It touched me, and I nearly choked,
felt I could cry to see them all ;
any hint they act upon.
But Gargantua led them out,
they worshipped him, forgetting me.
A blast of a bugle, and they rose,
took their helmets, shook the plumes,
stood up in their glittering armour.

In front of them Gargantua rode,
the apex of this arrow-head,
the sharp beak of this hovering eagle
that lingered over the far-flung plain.

A river of stars to leap the rocks
and net the hills with their wingless foam ;
in front of them Gargantua rode
tempting a meteor with his lance
to drop on them and join its heat,
sift it through the burning grain,
to lie there for the waves to break
and cool that mane of yellow sand.
A lance that challenged topmost stars
stood, the pinnacle, of this temple—
Gargantua was helping Donne—
but why he started on crusade
except to help his own adventure,
none of us knew, except Gargantua.
Mine was now a queer position,
Doctor Donne was out of sight
and Gargantua usurping
the privilege I take from men.
Out of sight ; but Donne could see
the meteor dancing in cold space
above Gargantua's boastful head.
He saw it and he started off
and ran to bask beneath its light.
Dimly through leaves and down the shadowy valleys running,
climbing to clear hilltops for a sight of dripping fire,
not throwing like the tongue of fountains
softening the ice-bound air
but falling out of space and time,
Donne could see his meteor drop,
plunge, try to pull back with ribbed wings,

but fall faster,
drop its control of speed,
run through the winds, but not waver from their force,
or stagger from their flow of rivers,
blow forth the cloud as chaff
from his fire breath of speed,
then Donne looked for Gargantua's fusion,
looked, listened, and waited long,
and when his breath had come, went on again.

A March Past at the Pyramids

" Two parallel straight lines can never meet."
Euclid.

" The brotherless Heliades melt in such amber tears as these."—*Andrew Marvell.*

THE door grates open. Two wild eyes look out.
Reconnaissance. Until a readjustment
of feathers, clothes, and gloves
has made her ready for the street fighting.

Make way, malicious children!
Stand back, until she finishes the steps
And moves along the molten asphalt.

Throw down those cones of light
which clothe a wall or tower!
Stand free from them, strong buildings!
As if the coat of shadows that you wear
had fallen to your feet;
and with this gold reserve
run down a gurgling river
past the regimental flowers
and close-cropped lawns,
as far as where the flower beds
and the pathways merge their stiff geometry
into a simplified horizon.

The hundred-handed trees
now wave their flags against her face,

and she is sailing down the stream
through every adverse current,
and past the threatening shoals
of unknown residents.

The carriages across the square
will run you down the steepest roads
and, for a slightly higher fare,
will take you where no rust corrodes ;
along the breathless streets, that is,
where deathless dowagers sustain
the shadow of high life in Paris,
and, in attempting it, constrain
to leash wild nature to their funeral car,
and make the gay clouds float like kites,
and wire the tall trees, bright as stars,
for buttonholes, at awful rites.

Then why is it, that You must walk ?
I see you, in imagination,
drawn on the terraces where talk
the shades who left us with elation,
and, leaning on the carriage side,
giants and dwarfs will point and shew
the lakes on which the satyrs ride
and hold the sails the zephyrs blow.

For in shy boats that float like birds
the satyrs once again set out
to find the fleece of golden herds
now feeding in the woods to flout.

New argonauts—who now, at last,
can see the trees, between the sails
that hang upon their golden mast;
the trees that gleam like golden rails

are throwing the ripe fruit down, down,
till, from their skiffs, the satyrs hear
the apples falling on the town
below the clouds, as fleeces clear.

The fountains with their crystal whips
are thrashing the teetotum dust
on which the glistening branches of the trees
drop down a coolness as she passes.

The simplified horizon is a fixture,
it does not run before her
like a hunted animal;
it does not leap down from the hills
and hide in the fierce green leaves
whose lapping tongues
drink in the rain of golden fire;
nor swim among the waves
that spread their tails,
shake forth their whirring wings
and try to imitate the battlemented clouds
running against the trumpet-throated wind.

Your mind is evidently set
to reach the daily goal,
the path's end,
where you turn again

and walk back home for lunch.
So, while you chase this mean horizon
of blank wall, I'll follow
in your wake—a second shadow,
with more evident intention.

In this net of changing paths
and different views,
giant figures loom like pointsmen in a fog
setting the lines,
directing the different phases
and future happenings.
While loud voices speak.

The man who built the pyramids
discussing them with William Blake
confessed the secrets of his Art,
and shewed them, once for all, as fakes.

The light wind drifting down the road
upon the scarce heard noises of the town
breathes just as cool upon the woods and hills.
It rests a little in the shimmering trees,
then, while the dying sun unclasps his hair
over the fresh fields and the gilded sea,
it plays with the swaying cornland
through those gold moving pillars
under the falling fountains of ripe fruit,
till the clear evening falls upon us all.

A natural clumsiness had always been
my bar to progress
until I conquered it by calculation.

I made a poor narcissus
when I pored into the river,
but in its smooth black mirror

I watched the meteor acrobats
whose shining wings and fiery hair
illumined the insensate air,

and in the straight lines of their flight
among the archipelagos
that glitter like a golden rose,

I saw the roads that never meet
and on them those that never talk
although together on their walk.

My natural clumsiness could not prevent
more abstract knowledge, and an obvious bent
for things that carry motion to a pitch
where only calculation, with its stitch
of make-believe, and taking things for granted,
completes the web, and leaves the answer planted
as strong as any fir tree hung with combs
to drop like bombshells at whoever comes.
My knowledge can hang nets to catch
the flaming sparks that set the thatch
alight above the floating towers,
trembling to whiteness under bowers

lit suddenly, and changed to gold,
when the sun awakes and calls his fold.
And when like gleaming jewels they lie
and fill the webs with coloured sky,
I hold some in my hand like fruit,
and point to them and shew their suit
fiery with splendour and the green
lawns on which the proud birds preen
feathers more gorgeous in their glow.

But leagues above the cooing flow
and running rivulets of wind,
spanning the clouds, one foot behind
resting upon the giant hills
down which the sunlight runs its rills,
the ideal pyramid will raise
its pinnacle too proud for praise,
that, like a diamond, writes a name
across the skies, and gives me fame.

And so, while smaller men may make
the soft singing and the golden shake
with which the ripe fields greet the sun,
into the joys for which they run
tired lives into a broken mould,
and then renounce the joy and fold
crippled limbs, rehearsing in their mind,
sights to remember when quick eyes go blind;
I can reach above the crowd
without a mask, without a shroud,
and watch them counting grains of sand
to tell the height my buildings stand.

I was the man who ran along
a valley at the planet's song
and guided by the golden chain
that shone above a little plain,
I reached the folds in which there slept
the silent lambs the king had kept
playing in the whispering air,
until he cut their woollen hair.

Chosen as the delegate
to represent our native race,
I travelled in a caravan
crossing hills unknown to man
until the song died, high in air,
which told us that our end was there.

I was the wise man of the South
and sang before the dragon's mouth
his all inevitable doom:
and now, outside a wretched room
fiery turbans paint the air
and Babel tongues are loosened, where
three running streams of races meet
and lay their offerings at his feet.

Waving palm leaves toss the air
in heavy spadesfull, falling where,
like steam-engines, cathedrals rise
to ring their bells within the skies.

Now who must take the precedence
among the triple race of man
collected at this mere pretence
to show the seeds of providence ?

An African from Mozambique,
is ready at my right-hand side.
Will he defeat the Jewish clique
and reach there first, in righteous pride ?

On a platform in the square
the local band confronts the air ;
playing together, till they sound
a note which sends the signal round.

Spontaneous gifts of homage, soon
flooded the house and filled the road ;
late-comers never knew the boon
of bettered days, but bore the load

unpaid and prayerless through their lives ;
wild honey, not yet in the hives,
shall comfort those who cry alone ;
their bed the sand, their food a stone.
" Bow down ! " his guardians say. " Bow down ! "
their threatening wings shut in the town ;
one human tribe obeys the call ;
two others run beyond the wall.

Priority it is that counts,
however high your incense mounts.
At night the weeping stars combine
to let their golden isles outshine

the waving fire before his throne.
The springing flames obscure the groan
of countless multitudes who pray
to painted birds, or beasts of prey.

At the vast inspiring sound
to which the tyrant god is crowned
while the distant valleys hear
the feet of those who run in fear ;

the anchorites who fill the caves
and feed with satyrs, sing aloud ;
they step into the surging waves
and float to Heaven in the cloud.

The fountains with their crystal whips
are thrashing the teetotum dust ;
Mrs. X is walking in the crowd ;
Mrs. Y is still outside the scrum.
Now is the daily tournament at hand
to prove the shouted statements of geometry.

The two come nearer ;
will they touch, or bow ;
or just fade back into infinity ?
They are the actors in this drama ;
blind are the crowd ;
tamed nature is an audience.

Mrs. X is ready with a smile
and spreads a feathered dignity around her ;
Mrs. Y. detests the common grass,
the sun-scorched railings, and the folding chairs.
And so they pass, and never bow,
and Mrs. X folds up her trembling wings,
to walk back sadly through the fading day

to show what might have been
to failing eyes ;
gold towers are building far above the sea,
and many suns are dangling in the trellises ;
while little waves run in
and shake their cooling snow
against the shadeless sand.
The windows in the gilded towers
have generous trees to shade them ;
from their branches
float down singing birds
to lie asleep upon the sills
like ready instruments
whose strings you pluck
when, through the dappled air,
down in the jewelled orchards,
where ripe tumbling fruit
and shimmering dew
are dancing to the silver sound
the Man who built the Pyramids
advances, leading on each arm
one of the changeless parallels
that grace the cylinders of History.

III

ST. JOHN FISHER COLLEGE LIBRARY

The Neptune Hotel

ARCHITECTURE, flowers' device
of tricks to play upon the sun,
building frail palaces that tempt him
filled with potentates for him to tumble,
playing with his image in the shrine.

A device of flowers to draw him down
and make him walk their golden roofs,
shaking thin walls with force of his fiery wind,
and when he goes in at the palaces
to scatter the pollen for his wind to carry.

Here are houses built above the fields
quite near to gardens of such growing strength
their harvest wrestles with the wandering wind,
but I stand to talk of the houses that lie
and shine like lilies in the gentle foam.

Here is the Inn of the sea-god Neptune,
these are the walls he allows to stand,
wide flung windows answer to the waters
yielding a horizon at the ocean's edge ;
the edge of the world lies easy there.

You need not climb the haughty hills
to gaze across the emptiness that lies beyond ;
from every floor, through each bright window
the bar of horizon shows along the sea,
proudest garden wall of any secret God.

Step out carefully, the dazzling lights
are manifold messages from unseen stars
piercing the ocean as it flows away
to wash bleached sands on untrod shores
quite near to gardens of the growing stars,

where they reach to fullness, plump their gilt
and when the blossoms are about to open
leaving the soft beds of conception
laid under arches of cool-shielding trees
to shadow the loving limbs that gendered them,

they spread full flowers against the azure night,
and some of them are messengers who run across
the high blue hills an hour before the new-born day,
others shine still like loud birds in trees,
or fish with gold lines in the wavering sea.

Over the water full domes float high,
their airy bubbles moored by the wind
to gleam with wine dropped from his cups
by the giant who feasts in a spotless Heaven
and loads us with light.

His beams dart down and stab the waters,
he walks on lattices across the waves,
I see them out in the farthest ocean
dry their manes ; I hear the tritons
gathering over the liquid plain.

They sound their conches ; some come swimming,
they gurgle and they leave a wake,
and when the snowy foam is melted
out of the depths with a bound there comes
one who left his mine of jewels,

and rolled his stones to a shining heap,
there are no robbers in his world,
as in our world, there are no woods,
no centaurs watching out of their caves
who breathe a sharp wind from the cliffs.

But even now, not long ago
our sails were flapping in an island's shade
and I heard the centaurs under the hills
trying the pipes of the wind-wrecked sailors
till a wind more feeble than their fluting came.

We have no grapes for the satyr's fist
to pluck from the vines and stain his skin,
no wide fields to run over and carry
a stolen girl to the waterpools
where they sleep in the flickering shade ;

conches are the pipes of Venice,
our forests are the moving waves,
they are the woods, the lakes, the fields,
the vineyards trellised from stout trees
over the running gold of the sea.

There lie the fields where the tritons gather,
they sing in the shade and they dance together,
a breath of wind, and the shivering waves
are fountains under the trees
and a waterfall down the hot lawns.

Here is the Inn of the sea-god Neptune,
here are the walls he allows to stand,
the windows open on the vineyards,
fruit of the waves, itself in water,
cool for the thirsty, lies at your hand.

The lips of night and the strings are silent,
the sleeping sun is alive again,
he walks on lattices over the waves,
the tritons lay the bridge for him
and work to the sound of their haughty conches.

Over the islands he rests a moment
to drop the seeds that reach to flowers,
if the sea-birds will but carry them,
the fields of snow will sing with lilies
and the sharp blue hills be robed in fire.

Now like a sailor against the canvas
he shows in the ropes and the latticed web,
the clouds, like birds from hot lands, are around him,
he opens the cage that they travel in
and they spread their wings through the air.

They feel the wind with their sails
and they flash keen wings in its breath,
then, as he calls them
singing, they fill utter space
and the bars that imprison them, echo their song.

Now the sun is right on us,
he stands and he raises his spear,
while he hovers to bless us
the towers, those tubes of loud music,
loosen their tongues.

The wind runs fresh to their lips
and they tremble with force of their song
through stems that now shake with their flowers
from the utmost petal in air
to the lake that they float on.

Iron tongues that talk as a hammer
are loosed and speak from the air,
the molten morning is ordered,
its metal runs to the word
and silence is born to loud bells.

The tubes are hushed, those bells are mute,
they close loud lips, they bow their heads,
the coming of the new-born light
is seen in silence, over the waves
that live and die, and are live again.

For they raise their crests and their eyes are fire
till they fall like snow with the wind,
but once more they shape proud plumes in the air,
and rising again through the clouds
the towers are tubes of solemn music.

Blown by the wind and strung with bells,
live from cool lips and hung with flowers,
the breath of living is free within them,
rays of sun, warm fingers, will pluck them,
and the stops of their song will be touched once more.

My windows showed the islands
striding on stilts through the sea,
they called to one another with their bells
and the foam sang low beneath the windows.
I looked for gardens and the cool of trees,
but I knew that the scent came out at night
not from such, but from the leaves of stars
and the whirling cataracts of fire-like water.

I see light on far roofs, a sheaf of arrows,
the barbs have stuck, but the plumes still quiver,
they hold to their points but shake their crests,
those birds on lawns that the dew conceals.
More arrows fall out of a cloud,
and as the waves draw from the sand
lion bodies grow lithe and are strong
and the waves draw back from their might.

Our hours are as shells upon the sand,
they sing for the waves to wash them with snow;
our fields of sand are yellow as the corn,
their lips as thirsty for the melting cloud,
and the waves will run up to them,
sing at our windows,
drop their snow before the growing islands.

God must be dead who walked upon the waters
and made men wonder at His march;—
a new way among cities, an end to the gods
that men may inhabit a harder world,
but keep the gods living to mock at them,
laugh at their idleness waiting a prayer.

A harder world without a God to catch us
when we drop from a scaffolding, fall from our web
and cannot spin a rope of silk
up which to clamber to the clouds again.
But the gods stand still like a statue in a garden,
and our laughter is heard, while they smile and are
dumb.
Sooner than pray, we will grant our prayers
and give to ourselves the gifts we ask.

I will sound a trumpet over the plains of sea
to light the torches for the evening feast,
the fruit that dangles through the clouds will shine
and be our galaxy of shimmering lights.
In boats that hover like a bird they come

and climb to the terraces that feel the wind ;
some have lived over the sea on white wings
cool and high as the cliffs,
and they feel as free again above the waves.

Before the morning comes to us again
we can build through the darkness.
Myself, if I could pave the lakes,
I'd run their waters past my walls,
sloping the valley for their running feet
to send them faster till they gather strength
to climb the paths I've laid for them.
They shall run down to gather strength
and the flight of their speed shall carry them up ;
the boats shall set their sails with the current,
they shall tremble with the eagerness of all the waters;
as they strain and make their race,
the sun shall come out walking on the waves,
his feet shall climb the mighty stairs
and pass them, treading with majestic speed ;
he shall be the first to reach
that terrace where the city stands,
before the waves and the clattering ships
stand still in the harbour.
Are we not proud to make the sun
climb to us bowing with his beams
to reach our height and stay an instant
before he climbs his secret tower ?
The ships now furl their sails
gliding to the busy quays,
but the waves run on to the shore and sound
as loud as bells that ring in the trees,

or whirl their song through clouds
that move with the wind and are light as leaves.
The walking of the men across the bridges, down the alleys,
has not the march of soldiers, or the feet of dancers,
but is the roll of waters, the balanced tread of sailors,
who cross the shaking hills of sea under every wind and sky.
Now at this time to mock the falls,
the fountains and the singing birds
that make soft beds for love in the gardens on the land,
voices run out of the boats and sing
on the laughing water under the windows.
The lutes are like fat hulls of ships,
their rigging and the shrouds are strings,
they are quite easy to the sailors,
but to the minds behind the windows
these lutes are as the fruit on trees,
the shaking strings are the leaves that hide
and draw the hand behind their shade
to feel the hidden bounty ;
and if this fruit was in their nets
to pay the players they would part the meshes,
let the tired hands touch and feel
those hills of snow they hide with love.
They'd slake their thirst and sing again,
although they cannot reach the fruit
their songs like birds can hover there
and peck it when the wind will help,
lifting the leaves, while making louder
each fall of song to drown the flutter
of hovering wings that linger to steal.

Then, when a curtain lifts, there drops
a ladder of light to the shadowed water
and time and space are born to climb ;
there is a moment to cross the sill
and lift the nets and take the fruit.

Thus was the cool night tempered with fire ;
the tritons woke again and felt the wind,
they watched most tensely how it shook and played
running among the glittering leaves of spray
till they knew the strength that the clouds must fight
setting their sails to profit by the force,
and now they waited for the sun to come ;
the hour of cockcrow blared through the fields,
the shadows rose at the creaking call
and left their task like workers in the dusk.
This crowing through fierce trumpets
rang more often from each valley,
was a beacon on each hill and a spear before each
door ;
heavy curtains fluttered with no wind,
the stones upon the mountains creaked like tombs.
Silence lay upon the plains till a spark
flickered through the darkness, and a trumpet rang
answering the far sound dwarfed by distance.

Then with his plumes more brilliant than the birds
the crest of the sun showed under the plain
as he climbed from the worlds where he strutted
through our night
and the fanfare rang still louder from the hills.

His crest and then his comb came out,
feeling the chill air like any fowl
he creeps out from his barn into the cold ;
he lifts his fiery feathers and the stars die out.

I built through the night and now I frame the day,
and make a Paradise for all the hours.
The waves are woken like the sleeping fields
by cockcrow voices loud and urgent,
giving out shrill orders on the serenading wind :
the flags upon the masts rap out commands.

We will send out ships upon the molten sea,
to cut through the foam and charge into the clouds ;
the sailors in the rigging will be wet with mist,
and the wind stand still like eagles in the air.
The people must be servile, must obey like sailors,
clanking and hoarse are the cranes from much work;
At the sound and sight of coming plenty
the changing currents of the air will sing ;
such are the scenes I focus on the wind.
It shall be a beauty that cannot be collected.

Turn up the lights and open wide the shutters,
this shall be a beauty never seen in brothels !
The power of wine, the fire of Dionysus
kindling a flame through the black woods of night
shall wear its garlands in deserted roads ;
the statue in the garden shall be dyed with that blood.
The shapes that stagger through their bones will
shake
and drop their wisdom like the Indian trees

that sleep in the sun and at night are fountains
melting to spice the metal of their flame :
now they can enter the bright lit houses
armed with guile to silence laughter.
Here are gathered the shuttered beams,
the lines of light that break before they shine :
these are the parasites among the trees
with brighter leaves to give the birds their life,
gilding the robbery with stolen fire.
At the first sign of surrender,
first longing for soft couches and mild air
with little waves to play with like soft lambs ;
leaping lions shall be loosed
to fall like fire down the fields
and run among the houses and quiet gardens ;
as soon as the ships lie still on the sea
and the sailors land and walk the islands,
bathe in a lake and lie beneath the trees,
start their twanging music,
their boats will prance like horses in a field,
and the wind shall sound the trumpets of battle.
The trumpet drifted down the woods,
it rattled only the youngest leaves,
then it swam through the sea and creaked among
our towers.

Ring sea-halls with loud music,
load your shells with the echo of the waves,
at the sound of this horn
the tritons shudder,
and windows tremble in the water castles.

The genius comes like a cloud from the distance,
a sudden growing in the fields of space,
the meteor burns
and the stars are blind,
the net of numbers holds but one.

They drag the sea and feel the void,
but it comes of itself
and is not found;
the fire will burn without a flame,
the waters flow without a source.

The water and the fire will melt
and make a lodestar in the air,
a floating island,
driven clouds,
all space contracted to one tower.

The tritons breathe again and bring
their tribute over the snow-bound hills;
and they reach the calm
and leave the foam
gliding swiftly, proud and eager.

Domes rise out of the waves, they gleam
and show smooth limbs and shining hair
with music sounding out of their throats:
swim nearer, tritons, see the quays
and climb the steps to the floating islands.

They clamber up the steps and crawl,
slipping on the rain-smoothed marble,
one of them drops his pearls,
they shine
the spray of fountains falling through the sun.

They had their audience and were fed,
called hoarsely
one to another,
at night each laid his conch aside
and slept half into the fountain's brim.

This was the tribute of the sea, but now
the sailors open cages from hot lands.
Out fly the birds
and sing to the sun,
they fill the clouds and echo in the rain.

The clouds can wander among the hills,
they lose themselves like light in a forest:
they sing bird songs to the sun,
his winds
will hurry them forth, and drive them home.

To the sun, his clouds are soft as birds,
their voices cooler than the waterfalls;
they give him shade
and speak his word,
they shield him with their painted sails.

They fly to us, their crests as turbans
with liquid tongues that babble water,
their wings are leaves,
their words clear springs:
they bring these gifts from an anchored world.

This is a town that floats, no woods
can cool us with their waving shade,
but the birds that cling
to a gliding ship
can flash in the sun and sing to us.

Our domes and towers are sails or smoke,
we float while other stars are still,
they sing their homage
in our wake,
and follow through the melted waves.

The waters are more smooth than lawns,
they have a drifting dappled shade;
the web of shadow
lifts and falls,
it flashes and it fills the net.

The daring few who cross the fields
are meshed and snared by the laughing leaves,
the clouds and waves
will hide and drown,
the net will drag their corpses in.

The bodies are renewed by fire
that tempers them and burns them clean,
the breath of speech
swells in their lungs,
they live again and laud the flame.

A choir of tritons floats between
the city and the sloping plain,
they hear the sailors
sing from their ships
and hush their horns to hear the praise.

Now are built the bridges
to walk firmly to the future.
No longer shall they trust themselves
to the fickle sea that changed with its moods,
or hang reliance on the wind
till the hand of an enemy takes the reins.
More swift than men on horses
they shall be the shepherds
to the flocks of cloud and the folds of sea,
to send them out to pasture, and to fence them in.
I see them open the watergates
till a gentle rain comes down from its forest
to play among the lawns and fields.

Unstop the towers again, sound forth
their music down the whirring wind!
It shall run apace and reach us
where we lie with idle sails.
In the sudden foam there breathes
a coolness that gives life again,

the city shows above the sea,
increases from its couch of snows
until the domes, like flowers, break out,
the fire of music fostered them
and raised them in the fields of sea.

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